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 RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 4587
 RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 2676
 RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD 2801
 RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4364
 RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 4892
 RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 2181
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 8092
 RUDKPNQ/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 1016
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0619
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 3083
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 8756
 RUEHLD/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1032
 RUFHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3642
 RUFHRA/AMEMBASSY RABAT 1343
 RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 5935
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CINCEUR FOR POLAD, BRUSSELS FOR USEC

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PREL, IS, LE, US, OREP, (FOWLER,W)
 SUBJECT: CODEL FOWLER: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF
 DEFENSE ARENS - LEBANON

REF: A) TEL AVIV 2543

1. CONFIDENTIAL ENTIRE TEXT.
2. BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING FEBRUARY 13 MEETING WITH CODEL FOWLER, ARENS QUESTIONED WHETHER LEBANON PRESIDENT GEMAYEL "CAN BE SAVED" AND REGRETTED THAT ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES HAD NOT WORKED TOGETHER EARLIER IN SUPPORT OF HIM. ARENS VIEWED THE FUTURE OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AS DEPENDENT ON THE LAF PUTTING ITS ACT TOGETHER AND SAID HE DOES "NOT SEE ISRAEL TAKING MILITARY ACTION IN BEIRUT." SHOULD GEMAYEL

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CONFIDENTIAL

84 3386460

SCO

PAGE 002
TOR: 152040Z FEB 84

NC 3386460

COLLAPSE, ISRAEL WOULD STAY IN THOSE AREAS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN SECURITY OF NORTHERN ISRAEL. AS FOR POSSIBLE IDF REDEPLOYMENT, THE DOMINANT CONSIDERATION WOULD BE PREVENTING ISRAELI CIVILIANS LIVING IN THE NORTHERN BORDER AREAS FROM GETTING SHELLED. ARENS SAID HE IS WORRIED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT PUTTING ENOUGH PRESSURE ON GEMAYEL TO KEEP THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT AND WARNED THAT ABROGATION OF THE AGREEMENT WOULD SET A "BAD PRECEDENT." END SUMMARY.

3. ON FEBRUARY 13, 1984, CONGRESSMAN WYCHE FOWLER (D-GEORGIA) HAD A FORTY-FIVE MINUTE MEETING WITH ISRAELI MINISTER OF DEFENSE MOSHE ARENS; THE DCM AND POLOFF ACCOMPANIED. THE DISCUSSION FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON LEBANON (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BRIEF MENTION OF THE JLP AND PROPOSED STINGER SALE WHICH ARE REPORTED SEPARATELY IN REFTEL). DEFENSE MINISTER ARENS DESCRIBED PRESIDENT GEMAYEL AS THE "LEGITIMATE PRESIDENT OF LEBANON" BASED ON THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM, BUT QUESTIONED WHETHER GEMAYEL "CAN BE SAVED." ARENS MAINTAINED THAT GEMAYEL "HAS DONE A POOR JOB, LACKED COURAGE TO TAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS, AND HAS GOTTEN PUSHED INTO A CORNER FROM WHICH HE IS UNLIKELY TO GET OUT." HE CRITICIZED U.S. POLICY TOWARD LEBANON, AND ESPECIALLY AMBASSADOR HABIB, FOR ALLEGEDLY DISCOURAGING THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT FROM COOPERATING WITH ISRAEL AND SEEKING TO PROMOTE A U.S. ROLE AS A BUFFER BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON. HE SAID THAT COORDINATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL ON POLICY TOWARD LEBANON IS OF "RECENT VINTAGE AND CAME LATE IN THE GAME." HE SPECULATED THAT HAD ISRAEL AND THE U.S. WORKED TOGETHER EARLIER IN SUPPORT OF GEMAYEL "SOMETHING COULD HAVE BEEN DONE."

4. COMMENTING ON THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION IN LEBANON, ARENS SAID THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS NOW LOST HALF OF BEIRUT WITH AS MANY AS HALF OF THE LAF DESERTING. IF THE LAF CANNOT PUT ITS ACT TOGETHER, NO ONE, NOT EVEN THE UNITED STATES, CAN HELP THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. THE ISSUE IS NOT DETERMINED BY THE RELATIVE MILITARY STRENGTH OF THE TWO SIDES AND THEIR SUPPORTERS BUT BY THE FACT THAT "THE SYRIANS ARE READY TO PUT A MUCH GREATER SHARE OF THEIR ASSETS ON THE SCALES" THAN EITHER THE UNITED STATES OR ISRAEL IS PREPARED TO DO. ARENS CONCEDED THAT BEIRUT COULD ONCE AGAIN BECOME A CENTER OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY BUT SAID HE DOES "NOT SEE ISRAEL TAKING MILITARY ACTION IN

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5. AS FOR WHAT MIGHT FOLLOW GEMAYEL'S POSSIBLE COLLAPSE, ARENS SAID "GEMAYEL MIGHT BECOME A SYRIAN STOOGUE, RADICAL ELEMENTS MIGHT COME TO POWER" OR VARIOUS MILITIAS MIGHT SHARE POWER. ARENS NOTED THAT IN ANY CASE, ISRAEL WOULD "STAY IN THOSE AREAS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER AREAS" UNTIL SUCH TIME AS ISRAEL CAN "DEAL WITH A LEBANESE GOVERNMENT ABLE TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE ARE NO TERRORIST ACTS

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84 3386460 SCO

PAGE 003
TOR: 152040Z FEB 84

NC 3386460

AGAINST ISRAEL."

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6. ON POSSIBLE IDF REDEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, ARENS SAID THAT THE "OPTIMUM LINE FOR REDEPLOYMENT DEPENDS ON THE DEGREE OF COOPERATION WITH THE LEBANESE ARMY." THE LINE SHOULD BE "SUFFICIENTLY FAR (25-27 MILES) FROM THE BORDER SO THAT THE ISRAELI CIVILIAN POPULATION IS NOT THREATENED BY SHELLING" AND "SUFFICIENTLY CLOSE SO AS NOT TO PRESENT TOO GREAT A BURDEN ON RESOURCES." THE "DOMINANT CONSIDERATION IS CIVILIANS GETTING SHELLLED...AN INDEPENDENT, SOVEREIGN COUNTRY CANNOT PERMIT SHELLING OF ITS CIVILIAN POPULATION WITHOUT RESPONSE."

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7. AS FOR THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT, ARENS SAID HE IS WORRIED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT PUTTING ENOUGH PRESSURE ON GEMAYEL TO KEEP THE AGREEMENT. ABROGATION OF THE AGREEMENT WOULD SET A "BAD PRECEDENT" AND SHOW OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA THAT THEY CAN MAKE AGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL, REAP ADVANTAGES AND THEN "STEP BACK" FROM THEIR COMMITMENTS.

BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. LEWIS
END OF MESSAGE CONFIDENTIAL

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